

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION AID-59

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEA-10 EB-07 IGA-02 L-03 AGRE-00
IO-13 SP-02 DHA-02 /099 W
-----250717Z 033773 /14
P 250545Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4788

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 DACCA 2833

PASS AID/ASIA/BIS AND USDA

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAID, EAGR, BG
SUBJECT: ADDITIONAL BDG REQUEST FOR EDIBLE OIL FOR RELIEF FEEDING

REFS: A. DACCA 2753 B. DACCA 2657

1. SUMMARY: RELIEF MINISTRY HAS SENT US COPIES OF ITS MAY 22 TELEGRAPHIC INSTRUCTION ON BDG AMBASSADOR, WASHINGTON, TO REQUEST USG SUPPLY 20,000 MT OF PEANUT OIL FOR FREE DISTRIBUTION TO DISTRESSED PEOPLE. WE ASSUME AMBASSADOR WILL BE APPROACHING USG OFFICIALS SOONEST. REQUEST RAISES FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE OF FEEDING RURAL DESTITUTE (THE SUBJECT OF A SELF-HELP MEASURE IN LATEST PL-480 AGREEMENT), BUT IN CONTEXT AND MANNER WHICH LEADS US TO RECOMMEND AGAINST ACCEDING TO ANY SUCH REQUEST AT PRESENT. IT MAY, HOWEVER, PERMIT US TO OPEN A DIALOGUE WITH BDG ON THIS ISSUE WHICH MIGHT LEAD TO SOMETHING CONSTRUCTIVE. END SUMMARY.

2. FOLLOWING IS TEXT BDG TELEGRAM DATED MAY 22 TO BDG EMBASSY, WASHINGTON, COPIES OF WHICH WERE SENT TO AMBASSADOR MASTERS AND AID MISSION DIRECTOR TONER, AMONG OTHERS:

BEGIN TEXT: DUE TO VERY EARLY FLOODING IN APRIL THIS
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YEAR OF THE LOWLYING AREAS OF SYLHET, COMILLA AND MYMENSINGH DISTRICTS, MOST OF THE STANDING CROP HAS BEEN DESTROYED. THE LOWLYING AREAS GROW ONLY ONE CROP A YEAR KNOWN AS 'BORO' TO BE HARVESTED IN LATE MAY. APART FROM THIS, YOUNG SEEDLINGS OF H.Y.V. CROP HAVE BEEN BADLY DAMAGED. DUE TO CONTINUOUS RAIN SOWING OF OTHER SUMMER CROPS HAVE BEEN BADLY

DELAYED AND EVEN JUTE CROPS BADLY AFFECTED. THE LOSS OF PRODUCTION OF GRAIN ALREADY TAKEN PLACE HAS BEEN ESTIMATED BETWEEN 750,000 TONS TO 1 MILLION TONS. FUTURE CROP PROSPECTS ARE ALSO NOT BRIGHT. AS A RESULT MILLIONS WILL FACE SEVERE SCARCITY OF FOOD AND EVEN A STARVATION SITUATION AND THEY WILL HAVE TO BE GIVEN FREE FOOD TILL THE NEXT HARVESTING SEASON. AS A NUTRITIONAL SUPPORT TO PEOPLE GIVEN FREE FOOD ABOUT 20,000 TONS OF EDIBLE OIL WILL BE NEEDED. WE SHALL BE GRATEFUL IF THE GOVT. OF THE UNITED STATES DONATES/AUTHORISES FREE ALLOCATION OF 20,000 TONS OF PEANUT OIL FOR FREE DISTRIBUTION AMONGST DISTRESSED PEOPLE OF BANGLADESH IN ADDITION TO OTHER FOOD ASSISTANCE WHICH THE UNITED STATES GOVT. MAY PROVIDE.

2. THE AMBASSADOR OF BANGLADESH IS REQUESTED TO TAKE UP THE MATTER WITH THE UNITED STATES GOVT. ON TOP PRIORITY BASIS. SD. FARIDUDDIN AHMED, JOINT SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF RELIEF AND REHABILITATION. END TEXT.

3. COMMENTS: (A) CROP LOSSES. BDG ESTIMATES OF CROP LOSSES FROM FLOODING ARE DISCUSSED REFTEL (A); IN ADDITION TO FLOODING, REDUCED BORO HARVEST CAN BE EXPLAINED IN PART BY LOWER FERTILIZER USE; (B) TIMING. THIS APPEAL FOR EDIBLE OIL FOLLOWS IMMEDIATELY ON USG REFUSAL TO PROVIDE FULL 40,000 MT SOYBEAN OIL, REQUESTED BY BDG; (C) PAST PERFORMANCE. BDG RECENT RECORD OF FREE DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD SUGGESTS ONLY VERY MODEST CONCERN FOR PLIGHT OF RURAL DESTITUTE. FOOD CONFIDENTIAL

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DISTRIBUTED FREE UNDER RELIEF CATEGORY AMOUNTED TO ONLY TWO PERCENT OF TOTAL RATION OFFTAKES IN JANUARY, 1977; ONE PERCENT IN APRIL. DURING THESE MONTHS, EDIBLE OIL OFFTAKES REACHED ALL TIME MONTHLY HIGH OF 6,000 MT; (D) LACK OF COORDINATION. BDG HAS NOT RAISED THIS ASPECT OF FLOOD LOSSES WITH WFP HERE, ALTHOUGH WFP ADVISOR IS WORKING CLOSELY WITH BDG TO ASSESS FOOD NEEDS IN WAKE FLOOD-AFFECTED BORO CROP; (E) OTHER DONORS. SUBSEQUENT TO REFTEL B, WE HAVE LEARNED THAT THE 12,000 TO 14,000 MT OF CANADIAN RAPESEED OIL, SCHEDULED TO ARRIVE BEGINNING OCTOBER 1977, IS BEING FINANCED FROM LAST YEAR'S FUNDS (CANADIAN FY ENDS MARCH 31) AND THAT A FURTHER \$10 MILLION CREDIT IS AVAILABLE FOR RAPESEED OIL UNDER CANADIAN FY 1978 AID PROGRAM; (F) SWITCH TO PEANUT OIL. WE DO NOT KNOW ANY BDG SEEKS PEANUT AS OPPOSED TO SOYBEAN OIL. THE FACT THAT PEANUT OIL IS MORE EXPENSIVE IS, OF COURSE, IRRELEVANT FROM BDG POINT OF VIEW, WHICH SEEKS OIL AS DONATION; (G) INFORMAL BDG COMMENT. ONE

RELIEF MINISTRY OFFICIAL TOLD MISOFF IN CONFIDENCE THAT THIS APPEAL WAS AGREED UPON AT MAY 21 BDG INTERMINISTERIAL MEETING AND THAT RATIONALASARZMSBOGUS; (H) THIS IS ONE MORE INSTANCE OF BDG TAKING FOOD AID REQUESTS TO WASHINGTON, WHEN USG SEEKS KEEP DACCA AS VENUE FOR SUCH DISCUSSIONS/NEGOTIATIONS; (I) COST. WE ESTIMATE COST OF TITLE II EDIBLE OIL IN AMOUNT REQUESTED WOULD BE, INCLUDING SHIPPING, AT LEAST \$25 MILLION.

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ACTION AID-59

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEA-10 EB-07 IGA-02 L-03 AGRE-00
IO-13 SP-02 DHA-02 /099 W
-----250716Z 033834 /14

P 250545Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4789

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 DACCA 2833

PASS AID/ASIA/BIS AND USDA

4. FURTHER COMMENT: FREE DISTRIBUTION TO DESTITUTE. THERE IS NO RPT NO "STARVATION SITUATION" AT PRESENT IN BANGLADESH. NEVERTHELESS, RURAL DESTITUTE IN BANGLADESH DO NOT RECEIVE ADEQUATE DIET AND COMPRISE IMPORTANT FRACTION OF TOTAL POPULATION IN COUNTRY. IN OUR APRIL FIRST PL-480, TITLE I AGREEMENT (ITEM V, PARA C.3), WE OBTAINED BDG AGREEMENT TO "IMPROVE PRCEDURES AND SYSTEMS FOR THE FEEDING OF DESTITUTE PEOPLE ON A WHEN AND WHERE NEEDED BASIS TO ENSURE ADEQUATE LEVELS OF NUTRITIONAL INTAKE". BDG NOW SAYS IT WANTS EDIBLE OIL TO DO EXACTLY THAT. WE ARE, ACCORDINGLY, RELUCTANT TO END DIALOGUE WITH FLAT REFUSAL TO PROVIDE ANY EDIBLE OIL FOR AVOWED PURPOSE OF FEEDING DESTITUTE. AT SAME TIME, FACTORS CITED PARA 3 ABOVE LEAD US TO CONCLUDE THAT ANY POSITIVE U.S. RESPONSE AT THIS TIME WOULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE IN THAT IT WOULD TEND TO REINFORCE VIEW OF BDG OFFICIALS THAT OBTAINING U.S. AID IS MERELY PROBLEM OF FORM OF PRESENTATION AND THAT RELIEF, NOT DEVELOPMENT, IS KEY TO U.S. FOOD ASSISTANCE.

5. RECOMMENDATION: WE SHOULD NOT ACCEDE TO THIS REQUEST. WE SUGGEST THAT ANY WASHINGTON AGENCIES, APPROACHED BY BDG AMBASSADOR, MAKE IT CLEAR THAT CONFIDENTIAL

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U.S. CANNOT PROVIDE TITLE II EDIBLE OIL AS REQUESTED, BUT ALSO NOTE THAT SUCH REQUESTS SHOULD BE TAKEN UP WITH MISSION IN DACCA. AT OUR END, WE WOULD SEEK TO DISCUSS WITH BDG THEIR PLANS FOR FREE DISTRIBUTION OF EDIBLE OIL AND/OR OTHER FOODS, TO GET BETTER INFORMATION ON WHAT COULD BE DONE, HOW IT WOULD BE DONE, THE NUTRITIONAL IMPACT, WHO MORE PRECISELY WOULD BENEFIT, AND WHAT ROLE U.S. FOOD MIGHT PLAY. SUCH DISCUSSIONS MIGHT BE UNDERTAKEN AS PART OF NEGOTIATIONS, IF ANY, LOOKING TO TITLE I AMENDMENT TO PROVIDE 10,000 MT EDIBLE OIL, AS RECOMMENDED REFTEL B. IN THIS MANNER, WITHOUT ACCEDING TO THIS REQUEST FOR A TITLE II EDIBLE OIL PROGRAM, WE MAY PERHAPS BE ABLE TO INITIATE A CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE ON PROBLEM OF FEEDING THE DESTITUTE.
MASTERS

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Message Attributes

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